

VZCZCXRO8257
RR RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #1115 1001933
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
R 091933Z APR 08 ZDS
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6778
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

S E C R E T BAGHDAD 001115

SIPDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (CHANGING CLASSIFICATION)

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/09/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PINR](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: TALABANI APPARENTLY PERSUADES IRAN TO CONDEMN IZ
ROCKET ATTACKS

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Patricia M. Butenis for
reasons 1.4 (b, d).

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: NSC Senior Director for Iraq and Afghanistan Brett McGurk spoke on April 7 with Iraqi President Jalal Talabani to discuss the ongoing political situation including the recently held PCNS meeting and the Executive Council meeting scheduled for that evening. Talabani reiterated that Iran wants more serious talks with the U.S. as a result of the violence in the south. After McGurk pushed back that their request rings hollow with rockets still falling on International Zone (IZ), Talabani appears to have persuaded Tehran to issue a statement on April 8 condemning the rocket attacks. On the domestic political scene, Talabani observed a greater sense of unity among the Iraqi political leadership, increased support for Prime Minister Maliki, and near-total isolation of the Sadrists. Talabani also confirmed the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) had agreed on a vastly reduced cabinet which would exclude KRG Oil Minister Ashti Hawrami) often considered one cause of the stalemate over national hydrocarbon legislation. End summary.

¶2. (S) McGurk noted that Iranian rhetoric with regard to positive intentions rings hollow with rockets still falling daily on the International Zone (IZ)) and noting the casualties suffered the previous night. Talabani pledged to call Iranian Ambassador Qomi with a firm message that the rockets must stop, as per Soleimani,s early April pledge to Talabani. Several hours later, Talabani called to report that Soleimani told Qomi Iran does not control every group firing rockets, but would restrain the groups it does control. Talabani said he told the Iranians, "you are not keeping your promises and we are noticing." Talabani then called back 20 minutes later to say Qomi had a follow up message for him. According to Talabani, Soleimani followed up the first conversation with Qomi and asked him to tell Talabani that Tehran would issue a statement the following day condemning the rocket attacks on the IZ. (Comment: The following afternoon the Iranian Foreign Ministry did in fact condemn the attacks on the IZ for the first time.)

¶3. (S) Echoing the views of other senior leaders, Talabani agreed there is a new sense of unity following the Basrah operation. Maliki and Hashemi,s relationship in particular has improved; Talabani noted that Hashemi during the fighting had offered to join Maliki in Basrah to show support. Talabani repeatedly expressed optimism that this could trigger Tawafuq,s return to the cabinet, saying Maliki and Hashemi agree the time is right and will meet Wednesday to discuss specific ministries and ministers. One of the most important results of Basrah, in Talabani,s estimation, was that Maliki learned he has genuine backing) political leaders of all stripes had rallied around him even in the operation,s first days, when the battlefield outcome

remained in doubt.

¶4. (S) Talabani claimed the Sadrists had been isolated and on the defensive at the April 5 meeting of the Political Council for National Security (PCNS). Every party in attendance condemned the activities of JAM) and in many cases of Iran as well) including representatives of former Prime Ministers Jafari and Allawi, who in recent months tentatively have courted the Sadrists. The meeting's final communique, according to Talabani, reflected a dramatic breakthrough and a new sense of unity among Iraqi leaders. "I have never felt as good as I do now," Talabani said. On the Sadrists, Talabani said their political isolation would help to marginalize the militant elements within JAM. He claimed to have told the Sadrists if they would abandon violence and pursue their aims politically, he would be their "lawyer" to the U.S. and GOI, but will not accept or support them otherwise. Talabani claimed the Sadrists are speaking more moderately and blame Jaysh al-Mahdi excesses on a handful of extremists, prompting Talabani to encourage limited prisoner releases or other gestures to encourage peaceful dissent.

¶5. (S) McGurk congratulated Talabani on the agreement between his Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) to shrink the bloated cabinet of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). Talabani highlighted the transfer of the KRG Energy Ministry from the KDP to the PUK. He specified this will mean unloading current KRG Oil Minister Ashti Hawrami, whose personal feud with GOI Oil Minister Hussein Shahrستاني has contributed to the stalemate on national hydrocarbon legislation. When asked what role Hawrami would take on, Talabani smiled and said, "he'll go back to London!"
BUTENIS